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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000316

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FOR NEA/ARPI BERNS NSC FOR RAMCHAND PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON
FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2016

TAGS: PGOV KU

SUBJECT: CABINET SUBMITS ITS RESIGNATIONS TO NEW AMIR;
ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW PRIME MINISTER EXPECTED SOON

REF: A. KUWAIT 303

¶B. KUWAIT 259 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Following the January 29 swearing-in of Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as Kuwait's 15th Amir, as expected, all 15 Cabinet members submitted their resignations. The Amir issued a decree permitting them to continue to manage their ministries until a new Cabinet is selected and assumes office. The Amir is expected to begin his customary "consultations" on February 5 and to name a new PM a few days afterwards. The new PM will have two weeks to form a new Cabinet (ref b). (The new Amir is addressing the Kuwaiti public on television at 9:00 PM Monday evening. We do not expect news on appointees or policies from this address.)

¶2. (C) First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (half-brother of both the current and late Amirs) is being touted as the likely successor to Shaykh Sabah as Prime Minister. If appointed, Shaykh Sabah would continue to be the dominant force in Kuwaiti politics. Shaykh Nawaf is widely viewed as disengaged and ineffective and as Amir, Shaykh Sabah is certain to exercise his rights and authorities under the Kuwaiti constitution which stipulates that the "Amir shall exercise his powers through his Ministers," and "The Prime Minister and the Ministers shall be collectively (and individually) responsible to the Amir." Most Kuwaitis do not expect the appointment of a strong PM and are instead focusing on the individual ministers. There is hope that Dr. Masouma Al-Mubarak, Kuwait's first female minister, will remain a cabinet minister and retain her portfolio as Minister of Planning. Many liberals also seek the appointment of a second, after Dr. Masouma, Shi'a to the cabinet.

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LeBaron